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ABSTRACT

Research literature relating to the power of dramatic television or movie entertainment for value, attitude, and behavior change is reviewed. Section 1 of this paper covers the research literature bearing on the effects of mass entertainment on adults, adolescents, and children. Section 2 briefly describes the research needs to be addressed by the Program on Psychosocial Adaptation and the Future's (PSAF) research project 1. A bibliography listing the over 100 items reviewed is included. (Author/PF)

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A REVIEW OF RESEARCH BEARING ON THE IMPACT OF TELEVISION AND MOTION PICTURES ON CHILDREN AND ADULTS

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As the project title implies, the long-range purpose of this study is to determine to what extent the power of domestic television or movie entertainment for value, attitude, and behavior change may be employed for social benefit during a time of mounting challenge to human survival.* Section I of this paper reviews the research literature bearing on the effects of mass entertainment on adults. Section III describes the survey and experimental studies now being developed for the Program on Psychosocial Adaptation and the Future's (PSAF) research project I.

At the outset, let us define the two types of effects with which we are concerned. One type, to which the most study has been given, regards effects variously identified as socially undesirable, or anti-social, e.g., the alleged instigatory effects of violence on television. The other type, into which television research is just beginning, is the presumed socially desirable, or prosocial effects, to which the new wave of "human values" programming in television may relate. This basic difference of emphasis has been over-dramatized on the research level by the contrast between helping and hurting (Klemm, 1972). We shall refer to the two types of effects by whichever term seems most suitable to the context. In general, for convenience of categorizing, we shall refer to them as plus versus minus effects.

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* This project purpose is explained in Convey, E., and Steele, C., PSAF RESEARCH PROJECT I: MASS ENTERTAINMENT AND HUMAN SURVIVAL. REPORT #1, A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.

I. EFFECTS OF HOUSEHOLD VIEWING OF TELEVISION AND OTHER MEDIUM EFFECTS ON ADULTS

1. Television and Technical Information as "Stand" Effects: Children, Adolescents and Adults

In keeping with the mood which this review will make apparent, PSAV Research Project I will focus on adults in everyday settings such as the home and the hospital. In undertaking such a study, one must first obtain a clear perspective on TV studies with all ages. This is necessary because: 1) To date, most television studies have been of children and adolescents, that the productive concepts, instruments, designs, and insights exist largely in the pre-adult literature; 2) The challenge for adult TV research can only be seen clearly within a developmental view of the adult as the outcome of the child, who long ago began to interact with this very large presence within the home.

Stand Effects on Children

The salient question, both in the research literature and in societal interest, is whether children on television influence

children's antisocial, violent, and delinquent. Short-lasting and parsimonious typical of these studies is the research by Berkowitz and associates, which established a compelling experimental link between exposure to film and aggressive behaviour in the normal subject (Berkowitz, Green and Rawlings, 1963a; Berkowitz, Green and Rawlings, 1963b; Berkowitz and Rawlings, 1963; Berkowitz, 1965). An impact between studies have established this linkage by unsophisticated experimental means (Belson, 1967; Himmelweit, Oppenheim and Vince, 1958; Lovaas, 1961; Siddall and Baker, 1971; Spiller and Robertson, 1971; Steuer and Himmelweit, 1971; Wiegersma, Lubbers, Rooyens and Kramers-Pals, 1980; Wiegersma and Kuttschreuter, 1985; Williams and P Jones, 1985; Wiltenburg, Malamuth, Heller, and Feshbach, 1971; Zuckerman, 1971).

Of this group of studies on screen-based things should be noted. A majority (Belson, Himmelweit, Steuer, Wiegersma) have the unfortunate impact of an overemphasis on the content body of social learning and modelling theory (later articulated in this area by Bandura). The Lovaas, Spiller, Steuer, and Jones studies were among those of the Surgeon General's Report that in 1972 led to the official conclusion that cause for alarm had been satisfactorily established. The studies by Wiegersma and Lubbers are of special interest in being methodologically weakest. Wiegersma's study (n= 98) is the first provided analytical longitudinal study to be conducted in this field, and while the principal investigator concludes his own findings, he has found a small but interestingly significant correlation (.21) between viewing TV aggression and aggressive behaviour over a three year span. Lubbers, conducting experimental research for BBC, has developed a behavioural measure of aggression. His laboratory

Minus Effects on Adults

At least nine studies have found the socially undesirable effects we are examining here with adults. The most straightforward of these, which few critics have faulted, is by Walters and Llewellyn-Thomas (1963). There were three groups of subjects, one of adolescent boys and two of adult hospital attendants and young females. Experimental groups watched the knife fight scene from the movie Rebel Without a Cause; control groups watched a film of constructive behavior. Post-test measurement of aggression was by the behavioral mode of shock level testing -- i.e., seeing how much electric shock the subject would administer to a role-playing confederate pretending pain. All three groups who watched the filmed knife fight willingly administered significantly higher levels of shock to the role-playing victim.

This seemingly simple study is of unusual importance in the adult context for the following reasons: 1) It was an application to adults by Bandura's closest collaborator in social learning studies of the approach Bandura applied so successfully to studies of children; thus it is forcefully tied to work with children and adolescents by method and by theory. 2) Though Walters' was a laboratory study, it was directly linked to social reality by employing a stimulus tied to the same incident of horror that influenced Bandura's investigation of TV effects on children. The knife fight scene from Rebel Without a Cause had been replicated in a street killing in San Francisco the day after the movie had been shown on television. 3) All three experimental groups administered greater shocks, showing a generality of effect

across age, sex, and occupational lines. 4) It is one of very few contemporary experimental studies of television-relevant* effects on adults other than college students (our survey found only three).

The most extensive set of studies of adults and television-relevant effects employed college students, and was conducted by Berkowitz and associates (Berkowitz, Corwin, and Heironimus, 1963; Berkowitz and Geen, 1966, 1967; Geen and Berkowitz, 1967). A characteristic approach for these complex investigations is to compare the responses of angered versus non-angered subjects to viewing films in which aggression is justified or not justified. Response is measured by the degree to which subjects will administer electric shocks to "victims" with whom they can or cannot interact (seeing, hearing, talking) during the chocking. As the design suggests, the interactive findings are also complex, but the main effect for these studies is again quite clear: viewing aggression consistently increases aggressive behavior. By varying means, Stricker (1960, 1962a, 1962b), Handlon (1962), Lazarus (1962, 1964), Speisman (1964), Nowlis and Green (1964), Nowlis (1965), Witkin and Lewis (1965), Wolfe and Baron (1971), and Tannenbaum (1972) have also obtained significant minus effects with college students.

Two studies with adults have found counter-effects or no effects. Feshbach (1961) found that college students who had previously been insulted showed a decrease in aggression after exposure to aggressive

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* Technically speaking, the bulk of the literature on television is of film showings to approximate the television impact: hence, our use of the term "television-relevant."

films (which prompted Berkowitz to put this catharsis effect to test by similar means, as described above). The second study was the most elaborate, bold, and expensive of adult television studies. With CBS financing, Milgram and Shotland (1973) undertook a large scale experimental field study. Three different versions of a single program of a network television series (Medical Center) were produced and broadcast over the air into several different cities. One included episodes in which the protagonist breaks open and robs some small medical-charity collection boxes. Then through a series of ingenious measurement situations, Milgram and Shotland attempted to find evidence of modeling effects -- that is, that subjects exposed to the minus program would imitate minus behavior, while subjects exposed to the plus or neutral program would show no change. No significant effects were found for any subjects in any of several elaborate test situations. This led the authors -- and the writers of their book jacket copy -- to conclude that television minus effects on adults were unproven.

In regard to the Milgram and Shotland study, it must be noted, first, that to reach such a conclusion one must wholly disregard the studies by Walters and Llewellyn-Thomas, Berkowitz, Geen, Witkin and Lewis, Stricker, Handlon, Lazarus, Speisman, Nowlis and Green, Wolfe and Baron, and Tannenbaum described above. Such an omission in a report of a study conducted at such expense, with such publicity, and purporting to provide a definitive statement on the issue, raises a very large question about this study at the outset. Secondly, the study seems peculiarly insensitive to the psychodynamics of reasonably intelligent, aware, cagey, and self-protective adults. There is evidence for adult modeling

of prosocial behavior, but to expect adults to model antisocial behavior in the suspicious circumstances of the test situation seems dubious. Lastly, however grand in concept, the study seems a classic instance of the dangers of a wholesale application of the laboratory approach to the field setting. In this instance, perfectly good experimental logic seems to have put a stimulus adequate for producing an effect within the microcosm of the laboratory into a macrocosmic field setting where it must inevitably be swallowed up like the proverbial snowball in hell. This crucial problem for television research will be further examined under the heading "The larger challenge of adult TV studies."

Several of these studies have aspects additionally worth remarking because of the possible relevance to the Program's television studies. The Wolfe and Baron (1971) study was of college students and of convicts with records of assaultive crime. This last is a particularly important adult subgroup for possible further investigation in view of the fact that contemporary events (e.g., the Kent State Massacre, the Fuzz and Zebra killings, the potential for the "suitcase Atom bomb") indicate that arousal of the few rather than arousal of the many may be the greatest danger.

From the viewpoint of the measurement problem, studies by Stricker, Handlon, Lazarus, Speisman, and Nowlis and Green, as summarized in Nowlis (1965), are of special interest. The largest difficulty in adult television studies is the development of measures capable of registering significant changes in adult attitudes, values, or behavior. Through

use of various forms of the Mood Adjective Checklist (MACL) with films selected to arouse various emotions, these investigators have shown both plus and minus effects in mood change of impressive significance. Moreover, the MACL, which is a non-threatening self-report form, and very easy to administer, is to date the only instrument capable of recording a subtle range of effects that approximates the complexity of real life. This body of work suggests, then, the demonstrational possibilities for new studies linking mood change to attitude and/or behavioral change.

The Nowlis study includes an additional finding of possibly great investigative importance. Nowlis administered the mood-adjective checklist to college students before and after six one-hour sessions of watching films selected for emotional arousal and then factor-analyzed the results. He found that mood adjectives commonly believed to be opposites -- and, therefore, unlikely to be present simultaneously -- were often checked together; that is, that after viewing arousal films, the subjects indicated feelings of both hostility and social affection, or a feeling <u>both</u> of vigor and of fatigue. A PSAT preliminary inquiry into what constitutes plus, minus, or neutral programming and effects has identified as of special investigative interest the program that the viewers rate as strongly plus <u>as well as</u> strongly minus. Cognitive dissonance studies in the plus/minus framework (Abelson, 1966), as well as the Rokeach work in the induction of conflict between values to produce values change (Rokeach, 1971) suggests directions for pursuing this investigative lead.

The Tannenbaum studies at Berkeley are of interest in examining the effects of arousal, within which the violence problem is subsumed, rather than the reverse, as is customary. They compare the effects of erotic vs. aggressive, vs. humorous vs. neutral films. A typical finding is that the erotic film produces more aggression that the aggressive film. This emphasizes the importance of the degree of arousal and the possibility of a generalizing emotional arousal in the minus (as well as plus) effects picture. Lastly, we could note the Wilson and Lewis (1965) study of the impact on college students viewing films showing the mutilation of male sex organs during primitive puberty rites. Using dream lab techniques, they found a large increase in dream imagery directly related to the aggressive or hurtful film content, but also that this imagery lessened if the subjects were told that the boys in the film looked forward to this experience as proof of manhood, and that it did not really hurt very much. This evidence of the influence of waking cognition on dreaming imagery suggests the desirability of study of aggression "defusing" techniques with adult viewers.

It can be seen, then, that again at the adult level, as for the child and for the adolescent, there is definite evidence of the minus effects of television. But having identified the effects "foothold" in this area, several practical questions must now be asked:

1. To what extent can these studies, predominantly of college students, be legitimately generalized to the general population? The only studies showing minus effects with adults other than college students are with small groups of convicts and hospital attendants. Only

the Rutgers study involving an assortment of commercial adults (also including the York City Head Start developed), attempts an adult generality. There is as yet no study of minor (yet pivot) television efforts on ordinary adults within the natural setting of the home. It is a PBS project purpose to provide such a study.

2. To what extent can these studies, predominantly of laboratory efforts with adults, legitimately be generalized to the field? Again, only the Rutgers study has attempted to range beyond the laboratory confine into the larger challenge of the field. The PBS project purpose is also to provide a study to fill this need.

3. Finally, with the long range PBS project purpose in mind, as well as very evident social need, has research to date created a case for action compelling enough to activate any better use of television for adults than presently prevails? Moreover, is there such in present research that will provide a guide to the concerned programming executive other than the ob-ego "avoid too much violence"? To both questions, the honest answer must be "no." The research components of the three networks have initiated methods of using outside social scientists for programming counsel, the National Association of Broadcasting has established programming codes based to some extent on social science, and ABC is developing a handbook to guide creative writers and producers. But, there remains the need for such guidance from research. The potential/plus direction, to be most explicit, is a highly encouraging development in which network and producer interests are now unequivocally linked to those of both internal and external

[illegible]

[illegible] studies, which take into consideration extensive fields with several interactions, should help answer these needs. Examples from the above research descriptions above to be considered in R&D designs include: (1) A measure of deviant, enforcing the [illegible] work. (2) Possibly an extensive use of the [illegible] objectives, enforcing barriers. (3) A sensitivity to religious differences, enforcing Middle East Issues. (4) An attempt to develop on a selective scale, not on such wide scale, the type of laboratory interventions into the [illegible] training for people than are presented by the Belgian study. Only by such steps can intervention problems gain the intimate acquaintance of "real world" aspect necessary to maximize the policy-relation of the validity of research findings.

Beyond these concrete R&D design from comparatively decent and [illegible] information available with which to plan specific field [illegible], another body of considerations involves R&D must be considered in the R&D project design. We will examine them after first completing the review of studies specific to Micronesia.

5. Researches and Research Problems in Trust Affairs

In keeping with the developmental pattern for social science research, the United Nations studies concentrate less here on the problem of resistance and social difficulty. For many years discussion of the study of training and helping were suggested as particularly by the "West" social problematic concerned with rigor and orthodoxy. Suggestions, the antagonism

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

case where a seemingly stuffy "battle of the books" among scholars is of pressing concern, because of its relation to leadership attitudes within television. For if the systems-maintenance view dominates one's thinking, it has this practical implication: If mass media effects are either non-existent or largely dependent on what the recipient takes from the sender's offering, rather than what the sender offers, the sender may then feel he is absolved of most of the responsibility for his offering. Moreover, it has this distressing implication for those who look hopefully to mass media for aid in solving the escalating problems that confront our society: It implies there is nothing but naive optimism to support any hope for the use of mass media as an instrument of socially much-needed value, attitude or behavioral change.

Within sociology, the countering systems-change views have been articulated by many, e.g., Etzioni (1968) for general theory, and Lerner (1967) for communications-relevant aspects. Sears and Freedman (1967) are among numerous investigators to experiment with, and marshall the evidence of an openness to change as well as a resistance to change operating in the audience for mass media. In a review of experimental studies directed to a key systems-maintenance finding, that subjects prefer information that supports their previous beliefs, Sears and Freedman found five studies showing some preference for supportive information, eight showing no preference, and five showing a preference for non-supportive information. One study by Freedman (1965) showed, in fact, such overwhelming preferences for non-supportive information that it was concluded with only 18 subjects; 17 had shown the non-supportive

preference. "Under some circumstances," Sears and Freedman conclude, "people seem to prefer information that supports their opinions; under other circumstances, people seem to prefer information that contradicts their opinions. In no way can the available evidence be said to support the contention that people generally seek out supportive information and avoid non-supportive information" (p. 232).

We have, then, this picture of two fictions which have influenced the beliefs of many within the adult real world which television research must more adequately investigate. One is the fiction of television as the all-powerful molder of our thoughts and actions, for better or worse. The other is the fiction that television has the power to change nothing but product preferences. These are dangerous fictions not only because they have distorted public debate, but also because they may lure the unwary researcher into a theoretical and practical cul-de-sac. A reconciliation of these views articulated by Bauer (1964) is in keeping with the Sears (1965) empirical findings. Bauer suggests the <u>transactional</u> model be used "in the sense of an exchange of values between two or more parties; each gives in order to get" (p. 345). As Bauer further elaborates: "In addition to the influence of the audience on the communicator, there seems little doubt that influence also operates in the 'reverse' direction (p.345). In other words, we are, in the end, left with a view corroborating direct observation -- or common sense bolstered by science -- that what the communicator puts on the air can have minus effects, for which he cannot evade responsibility, or plus effects, for which he can legitimately claim credit. At the same time, what he puts

on the air may or may not have the effect that is desired, or that is suspected, depending on the nature and situation of the observer. Moreover, the Bauer suggestion of the transactional model adds the deeper interest lying within this line of thought -- the aspect that raises it out of the realm of an increasingly sterile pro and con theoretical debate into a dialectical view with exciting possibilities for research and social policy. For we see that the effects of greatest interest may be determined by the interplay between what is communicated and what develops within the observer over a period of time, during which a cognition or emotion, affecting values change is developing.

Can this interplay be studied not solely in the laboratory of experimental social psychology (as has been done for interpersonal perception), but within the slippery and difficult world of television reality? The extensive work of Rokeach (1971) in value change and the Johnson, Friedman and Gross (1972) study of the development of adolescent identity patterns through interaction with television programming patterns suggests that it can. The systems-maintenance versus systems-change issue suggests further that basic to such a study would be a body of work in personality orientations toward openness vs. resistance to change. A considerable body of such work does exist, by Rokeach, Eysenck, Adorno, Tomkins, and others, as summarized by Loye (1971; 1974a).

Thus, within the television studies summarized earlier and this summary of the larger theoretical context, we may glimpse research pertinent to the challenge of using mass entertainment to better the human condition. But it is evident that something beyond the customary

approach is required. The research strategy must have the bold dimensions Lewin (1948) originally visualized for his concept of action research. It must further be sensitive to the respect that Lewin embodied for the human being we routinely refer to as the "subject." As a matter of practicality, investigators have been able to deal with subordinated children, adolescents and college students as "subjects," but to study adults in their natural habitats will require a subtle, but important change of attitude for the experimenter. These are our peers in terms of interest in, and susceptibility to, media impact, and they will expect to be treated as such. Moreover, the transactional model requires that the subject no longer be viewed in the customary way, but as a collaborator in the research. "The answers have come increasingly to be seen in entering the phenomenal world of the audience, and studying the functions which communications serves," Bauer notes (p.333). "The failure in research to this point has been that the audience has not been given full status in the exchange."

As we will develop in closing this section, our investigation of the possibilities for remedying this situation indicates that cable or closed-circuit broadcasting systems may provide a feasible answer. However, we must first examine the stimulus or indexing problem to complete our survey of matters bearing on adequate research design.

4. Plus/Minus Beginnings and End

As we will briefly develop later in reporting a survey already underway, one first encounters the problem of how to code stimuli as a

practical matter of trying to identify stimulus programs for experimental use. By what means can one determine what is "plus," or "minus," or "neutral" programming? There are logical methodologies for answering this question, but of greater concern here is an area of larger social meanings into which the need for a clearly defined stimulus provides the entering point.

Those who have looked beyond the beginnings of the coding problem to research ends in television have recognized the primacy of stimulus coding writ large, or the indexing challenge. This is to say that whether one looks at the microcosmic level of research, or the macrocosmic level of social policy, the basic problem is the same: how does one define what is beneficial versus what is harmful to human beings? We have been examining possible means for defining stimuli and monitoring impacts on the research level. On the social policy level, what seems to be needed is an extension of this kind of methodology to create something for the body social akin to the thermometer -- a device showing either health or cause for alarm in terms of numbered levels. The need is further to develop such an index (or indices) in such a way that it may provide a routine means of social and industrial self-regulation.

Investigated by Bauer and others (Bauer, 1966) more broadly on the national level, this search for the Social Indicator within television has for several years now been the concern of Gerbner (1974) and his associates at the Annenberg School of Communications in Philadelphia. The Gerbner study focuses on minus effects, specifically, all possible

ramifications of violence. The result is the Violence Index, a method of coding and quantifying violence on television through an annual content analysis of all network programs for a sample week in October. By this means, Gerbner has developed a scientific method of monitoring violence levels for the guidance of both industrial and governmental policy-makers. A comparable index for monitoring prosocial behavioral levels is now under development by Liebert and his associates at the Media Action Research Center of United Methodist Communications.

Despite the obvious need for such indices, their development has raised questions that are of fundamental importance for adult as well as all television research. A problem with prosocial indexing noted by Gerbner, for example, is raised by the example of cooperation. This seems a highly desirable prosocial behavior, but the Nazis placed a high value upon cooperation, and those who then cooperated with them in eradicating the German Jews were participating in antisocial behavior. Likewise, the surgeon, in slashing open the chest of a dying man to massage the heart is performing a seemingly violent act as prosocial behavior. Moreover, while it is recognized within the television industry that some form of indexing might greatly facilitate programming decisions, indexing is also feared as a danger in that simplistic monitoring might create a stultifying straight-jacket.

In this context, several aspects of the PSAF studies are especially meaningful. The first is the ongoing study to be described in the second section of this paper -- an attempt to identify programs in terms of plus, minus and neutral effects through ratings by diverse groups of viewers,

and then to find out what lies behind their vantage. The long-range purposes will be to identify the criteria for pro-, ethno and neutral judgements, and thereby provide data useful both to the developers of indices and to those concerned that the indexing reflect a comprehension of the "whole man" and desirable social ends. For, as the Real and Mangan examples illustrate, the problem is not only to identify behavioral or attitude bits, but also to quantify this analysis with an identification of the ends to which this behavior is directed, which may then determine whether it is to be regarded as pro- or anti-social.

It is in relation to this need for identifying the ends implied in values that two other aspects of the PSAT studies should be noted. One aspect is the eight year study by PSAT Director Roderic Gorney, M.D., which resulted in The Human Agenda (Simon and Schuster, 1972). This evolutionary study, rooted in biology, traces the development of the human being, and of human values, out of the earliest pre-history into the present, and then explores the options for our future as a species. Out of this exploration of human, or prosocial goals came the impetus for this study of the effects of television entertainment on values, and a second cross-cultural study of the social consequences of varying patterns of interpersonal relationships (Gorney, 1971; Gorney and Stewie, 1974).

To describe the cross-cultural project would needlessly lengthen this paper. It should be mentioned, however, because of its potential importance in this context as an investigation of viewpoints often

[illegible] to translation studies. In the subsequent social psychological and sociological methods of gaining an understanding of translation effects and impacts, the contributions of those who studied under this discipline will help to look at the subject criteria, social psychology, and anthropological perspectives.

[illegible]

Grosjean has set forth requirements for credible bilingualism research:

> (1) The group of persons studied (the "bilinguals") must be representative of the larger group to which the results are subsequently [illegible]. (2) The coding conventions must be reasonably [illegible] [illegible]. (3) The "language [illegible]" (i.e., the trigger or activation) must be the appropriate one for the [illegible] (4) The "[illegible] behavior" measured (i.e., the [illegible] behavior of the subjects and the means by which it is categorized) must be relevant to the real life language [illegible] of bilinguals in [illegible]. (5) The social context of the interview situation must be relevant to the social context of real life, in which the bilingual shows [illegible] of [illegible] in being proficient [illegible].
>
> (Grosjean, 1985, p. 132).

Through the initial explorations of the bachelors proficiency exercise, we have concluded that the only way all of these criteria can be met in the ASU research is via the capabilities of video and closed-circuit television. A basic reason for this is the present operational video and closed-circuit capacity that (1) [illegible]ensures [illegible] and (2) [illegible] these [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible] or [illegible] through [illegible] [illegible]. There is also the long-range prospect of two-way video communication, so that the viewer may

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

[illegible]

(b) [illegible]

[illegible]

(c) [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

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